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THE PHILADELPHIA TRADES SCHOOL

BY WILLIAM C. ASH,
Principal.

As the result of an effort on the part of the Master Builders' Exchange of Philadelphia to establish a trades school in connection with its work, Mr. Murrel Dobbins, a member of the Exchange and of the Board of Public Education, interested himself in the movement, and through his activity there was opened in this city the first trades school as an integral part of the public school system in the United States.

After the question of the addition of industrial education to the public school system was introduced by Mr. Dobbins, a committee was appointed to investigate industrial conditions in Philadelphia and report the trades which were most practiced in and about the city.

Following the report of the committee on investigation an abandoned school building at Twelfth and Locust streets was equipped with work benches and tools and in September, 1906, was opened for the registration of students in the following trades: Bricklaying, carpentry, plastering, plumbing, printing, blacksmithing, house and sign painting, electrical construction, architectural drawing, mechanical drawing, sheet metal working, pattern-making and pipe-fitting.

Owing to the lack of sufficient registration in seven of these trades, they were abandoned in the day school course. The school is in session regularly during each school day of the year from 9 a. m. to 12 m. and from 12.30 p. m. to 3.30 p. m. Instruction is offered in the following trades: Carpentry, architectural drawing, mechanical drawing, electrical construction, pattern-making and printing. The shop instructors are skilled master mechanics in their trades.

The aim of the school is the development of intelligent, self-respecting citizens, young men who after a short experience in actual work should make the highest type of American workmen. To this end an effort is made to stimulate an interest in and dignify the calling to which the students will go. The school does not aim

to prepare its students for any higher institution of learning, and so does not in any way overlap the usefulness of the existing high or manual training schools.

Of the thirty school hours in the week fifteen are spent in the shop work of the trade selected and fifteen are devoted to the study of English, mathematics and drawing. In all the academic work an effort is made to present actual shop problems and trade literature. In English the course includes grammar, sentence structure and some cultural English, letter writing and business forms, commercial history and commercial law.

The mathematics includes algebra, geometry, bookkeeping, and in some of the trades trigonometry. Problems are given in estimating from specifications. In the drawing room the work is in keeping with the trade being studied.

Arrangements have been made whereby, in the third year in all the trades, the students will spend from four to six weeks at actual work in their trades with various industrial establishments throughout the city. In this way we hope to approximate a finished workman.

Owing perhaps primarily to the general impression that manual labor is degrading and to the ignorance on the part of the public in general and of the public school teachers in particular of the existence and purpose of the Trades School, one of the difficulties has been to get children to take up the work of the school. This difficulty is gradually being overcome as the teachers in the elementary schools learn of the school and by their directive influence point those boys who are industrially inclined to the school which will best fit them for the highest service and make them of most value to society.

During the school year of 1906-1907 the enrolment in the day school averaged forty-five. The next year the number on the roll increased to one hundred and twenty-five, and this current year there are two hundred and twenty-five young men at work in the various trades. The average age of the students is sixteen years and six months.

The student body is made up principally of boys who finished the work in the grammar grades and were transferred directly to this school, but about thirty per cent of the young men have been out of school for a length of time varying from six months to five

years, and are now taking advantage of the opportunity offered for definite trade instruction. Some of this smaller group are supporting themselves by working at night; others have quit their employments and are devoting their entire time to the work of the school.

The courses in all the trades have been arranged to cover a period of three years. Students satisfactorily completing any of these courses will be graduated and presented with a diploma by the Board of Public Education.

Report of cost of Day Trades School for the year 1907-08

Departments.	Average enrolment.	Total cost per department.	Annual cost per pupil.	Value of work done per department.	Net cost per department	Net cost per pupil per department.
Drawing, architectural....	13.6	\$869.58	\$63.94	.....	\$869.58	\$63.94
Drawing, mechanical.....	25.1	1,608.47	64.08	.....	1,608.47	64.08
Electrical construction....	67.3	4,545.55	67.54	\$129.00	4,416.55	65.62
Carpentry.....	7.4	519.32	70.18	82.62	436.70	59.01
Patternmaking.....	9.8	688.07	70.21	109.38	578.69	59.04
Printing.....	16.8	1,864.82	111.00	779.30	1,085.52	64.61
Total.....	140.0	\$10,095.81	*\$72.11	\$1,100.30	\$8,995.51	\$64.25

*Average cost per pupil

The evening school is in session from 7.30 till 9.30 five nights per week from October 1st until the third week in April. In addition to the trades taught in the day school the following are taught in the evening school: Bricklaying, plastering, plumbing, pipe-fitting, sheet metal working and house and sign painting.

From the beginning of the movement in Philadelphia the demand for instruction in the evening trades school has exceeded the capacity of the building. In 1907 a second evening school was opened in the annex of the Northeast Manual Training School, at Howard street and Girard avenue, and the work has been so arranged that two groups of students can work in each school, each group attending on alternate school nights. Even with this arrangement, the number of young men registered and waiting admission exceeds the number in attendance in both groups.

Plans are being considered by the Board of Education for the extension of the system of evening trades schools by building the basements of all new school buildings so that they may be used in part for instruction in one or more of the trades.

The courses in the evening school do not include any academic work. The entire school time is given to instruction in actual

trade work by skilled master mechanics in the various trades. The average age of the evening school students is twenty years. The percentage of students who are at work during the day in the trades being studied varies from sixty-six to fifteen.

Following is a detailed report of cost for the Evening Trades School for the school year 1907-1908:

The numerals at the head of the columns indicate:

1. Average membership.
2. Average cost per pupil per term.
3. Average value, per pupil, of commercial product furnished the Board of Public Education or expended in the betterment of the school building.
4. Net cost of pupil per term.
5. Net cost per pupil per session of two hours.

	1	2	3	4	5
Blacksmithing	15.1	\$36.69	\$10.61	\$26.08	.21
Bricklaying	33.2	33.20	.60	32.60	.26
Carpentry	33.7	24.77	.....	24.77	.19
Drawing	56.3	16.62	.....	16.62	.13
Electrical	110.	16.85	.....	16.85	.14
Painting	28.5	21.92	6.94	14.98	.12
Patternmaking	28.9	18.69	.52	18.17	.14
Plastering	13.1	36.78	4.58	32.20	.27
Plumbing	49.6	25.80	.02	25.78	.21
Printing	28.5	23.22	7.03	16.19	.13
Sheetmetal	38.2	27.06	1.24	25.82	.21
Pipefitting	15.4	44.21	6.62	37.59	.30